



Tips to Help Lower Your Energy Bills this Winter

Natural gas prices have reached record highs, and that means some Georgia families will see an increase in their home heating costs this winter. However, there are a handful of common sense steps you can take to help lower your utility bills. Congressman Barrow has compiled a list of cost cutting tips from:

[The Georgia Public Service Commission](#)

[Georgia Natural Gas](#)

[The Consumer Credit Counseling Service](#)

[SCANA](#)

[The U.S. Department of Energy](#)

- Check the insulation level in your attic. Proper insulation can reduce your heating and cooling bills by up to 30 percent. If you have less than seven inches of fiberglass insulation in your attic, consider adding another layer.
- Check your furnace filter frequently, and replace or clean it once a month or as needed. A dirty filter can drive up the cost of heating your home.
- Install a programmable thermostat that automatically adjusts the temperature when you're not at home. You could see up to 15 percent in annual savings by programming your thermostat five degrees lower for eight hours per day during the winter.
- Set your thermostat at 68 degrees. Every degree you lower the thermostat reduces your heating costs by three percent or more.
- Lower your thermostat to 65 degrees if you plan to be away for more than a couple of hours.

- Consider replacing any gas appliances that are more than 10 years old with more energy-efficient models. By replacing a conventional unit with a high-efficiency gas furnace, for example, an average homeowner could save \$135 per year – that's \$1,350 over a unit's 10-year life span.
- Have all gas appliances checked by a qualified heating contractor to make sure they are in proper working condition.
- Repair leaky hot water faucets.
- Set hot water temperature at no more than 120 degrees.
- Run only full loads in your dishwasher. Avoid the rinse-and-hold cycle and save the seven to 10 gallons of water that pre-rinsing requires.
- Set your dishwasher on the low-temperature setting unless your dishes are very dirty.
- Use the "energy saver" switch on your dishwasher to shut off the drying element. That greatly reduces the energy used.
- Use the cold water setting on your washer for rinsing your clothes. Most of today's laundry detergents work effectively in cold water.
- Install a flow restrictor on your shower. This device can cut the cost of taking a hot shower in half. It generally costs less than a dollar, is easily inserted into the shower head and cuts the flow of water virtually in half.
- Clean the lint from your dryer after each use.
- Preheat oven no more than five minutes before beginning to bake.
- Keep your freezer and refrigerator as full as possible.

- Position your refrigerator and freezer away from your cooking range, when possible.
- Rearrange furniture or shorten draperies so heating registers and air returns aren't blocked.
- Don't heat or cool unused space in your home. Close registers in extra rooms or cover them (be sure to use nonflammable material) if they are not adjustable. However, do not close more than 20 percent of the registers in your home. This might interfere with the operation of the central heating/cooling system.
- Use "draft blockers" at the base of your doors (rolled up towel or a small blanket are a great alternative to store-bought ones).
- Open curtains during the day to allow sunlight to enter; close curtains at sunset to help lessen the loss of heat through windows.
- Keep traffic in and out of the house to a minimum. The more you open the doors, the more heat escapes into the cold air outside.
- Use a humidifier in colder months. When air is moist, you'll feel warmer and you can keep your thermostat lower.
- You can choose window treatments or coverings not only for decoration but also for saving energy. Some carefully selected window treatments can reduce heat loss in the winter and heat gain in the summer. They include the following: Awnings, Blinds, Draperies, High-reflectivity films, Insulated panels, Mesh window screens. Overhangs, Shades, Shutters, Storm panels, and Window treatments, however, aren't effective at reducing air leakage or infiltration. You need to caulk and weatherstrip around windows to reduce air leakage.